

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

BIB-01 /061 W

----- 078990

R 191707Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4319

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 16961

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT,PINS, IT

SUBJECT: REPUBLICAN PARTY VIEWS OF ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE

SUMMARY: TWO REPUBLICAN PARTY LEADERS EXPRESS GUARDED OPTIMISM ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE DC WILL PULL ITSELF TOGETHER AND WILL BE ABLE TO STOP THE RECENT ADVANCES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. SOCIALISTS ARE SEEN AS NECESSARY EVIL, WHO MUST BE CONVINCED THAT ENTRY OF COMMUNISTS INTO NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IS UNACCEPTABLE. APPRECIATION EXPRESSED FOR DE MARTINO INVITATION TO US AND FOR CLEAR PUBLIC STATEMENT OF USG ON COMMUNIST ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR RECENTLY HAD OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE WITH TWO LEADERS OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY (PRI): ODDO BIASINI, NATIONAL SECRETARY OF THE PRI, AND ADOLFO BATTAGLIA, UNDERSECRETARY AT MFA. NOT SURPRISINGLY, SINCE THE PRI IS THE ONLY DEMOCRATIC PARTY UNDISTURBED BY SERIOUS INTERNAL DIFFERENCES, THEIR VIEWS ARE REMARKABLY SIMILAR.

2. THE REPUBLICANS ARE ALSO UNIQUE IN THEIR GUARDED

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OPTIMISM. BOTH BIASINI AND BATTAGLIA SAY THERE ARE

SIGNS THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (DC) LEADERSHIP HAS FINALLY GOTTEN THE MESSAGE AND IS TRYING TO CREATE A RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT. THEY POINT TO ITS CAREFULLY DEVELOPED RELATIONS WITH THE UNIONS AND THE LIKELIHOOD THAT IT WILL SUCCEED IN AVOIDING ANOTHER HOT AUTUMN. THEY ALSO POINT TO THE GOVERNMENT'S NEW ECONOMIC PLAN (ROME 16856). GIVEN ANOTHER YEAR AND ONE-HALF, AND THE SAME DETERMINATION TO WORK AND ACCOMPLISH, THERE IS A REAL POSSIBILITY OF HALTING THE COMMUNIST ADVANCE. HOWEVER, EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON THE DC. IT MUST UNITE AND DEVOTE ALL OF ITS ENERGIES TO FIGHTING THE POLITICAL BATTLE. MOST OF THE DC PARTY, ACCORDING TO BIASINI AND BATTAGLIA, IS TIRED OF FIGHTING AND WANT A UNITED PARTY. THEY KNOW THEY ARE THREATENED AND ARE READY AND WILLING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. ALL DEPENDS ON THE LEADERSHIP OF THE DC AND THE CHOICES IT MAKES. IT SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE DC'S ELECTORATE IS NOT ON THE LEFT OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. MOVEOVER, THERE IS NOT ROOM FOR THE DC PARTY ON THE LEFT--THE PCI AND THE PSI HAVE ALREADY TAKEN THAT GROUND. THE DC MUST MAKE A CLEAR CHOICE OF CONTRAST AND OPPOSITION TO THE COMMUNISTS OR IT WILL FALL APART.

3. IN CONNECTION WITH THE FOREGOING, BIASINI OFFERS THE THEORY THAT FROM 1946 UNTIL THE MID-60'S THE DC'S STRENGTH WAS BASED ON THREE POINTS: (1) SUPPORT FROM THE CHURCH; (2) CLOSE ALLIANCE WITH CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE (E.G., CISL, ACLI, CATHOLIC YOUTH, ETC.), AND (3) ANTI-COMMUNISM. SINCE THE MID-60'S, THE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL HAS LED THE CHURCH TO CHANGE POLICY AND TO WITHDRAW FROM ITALIAN POLITICS. THIS, TOGETHER WITH DC INATTENTION, HAS LED TO THE LOSS OF DC CONTROL OVER ASSOCIATED CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS. AND FINALLY, THE DC ITSELF HAS CHANGED ITS POLICY TOWARD COMMUNISM. IN BIASINI'S VIEW IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE DC BESTIR ITSELF ON THE FIRST TWO ASPECTS AND ADPT A CLEAR POLICY ON THE THIRD. UNLESS IT DOES SO, IT IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE LOSING

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SUPPORT AT THE POLLS.

4. IN CONNECTION WITH THE DC LEADERSHIP PROBLEM, BIASINI BELIEVES THAT FORLANI IS PROBABLY THE BEST CHOICE FOR PARTY SECRETARY BECAUSE THERE IS A REAL POSSIBILITY THAT HE CAN GAIN SUPPORT OF ALMOST ALL FACTIONS OF THE PARTY. FOR THIS REASON, BIASINI BELIEVES THAT FORIANI IS RIGHT TO MOVE SLOWLY AND NOT

TRY TO GET THE SECRETARYSHIP AS THE NOMINEE OF ONE GROUP OR ANOTHER. MOREOVER, HE SUGGESTED THAT THERE IS A REAL POSSIBILITY THAT FORLANI MAY BE PROPOSED FOR THAT POSITION BY THE PRESENT INCUMBENT, ZACCAGNINI, WHICH WOULD OF COURSE GIVEN HIM THE BEST POSSIBILITY OF ACHIEVING A BROAD BASE OF SUPPORT WITHIN THE PARTY.

5. IN COMMENTING ON THE SOCIALISTS (PSI), BIASINI EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR THE REPORTED INITIATIVE OF INVITING DE MARTINO TO THE US, AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT HE WILL GET HIGH LEVEL ATTENTION AND CONVINCING TALK ON THE DANGERS OF BRINGING THE PCI INTO THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. BIASINI SAID THAT THE PSI IS "UNFORTUNATELY ESSENTIAL" AND THAT IT MUST THEREFORE BE PERSUADED THAT IT IS NEITHER IN ITS INTEREST NOR IN THAT OF THE COUNTRY FOR IT TO MAKE COMMON CAUSE WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI). IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF EVER FORMING A NON-COMMUNIST ALTERNATIVE TO THE DC, BIASINI REPLIED THAT IT IS NOT LIKELY FOR A LONG TIME BECAUSE THE PSI WILL NOT PARTICIPATE. THE FAILURE OF SOCIALISTS UNIFICATION IN 1968-69 EFFECTIVELY ENDED THIS POSSIBILITY FOR SOME TIME TO COME. PSI NOW OPTIMISTICALLY HOPES THAT IT ALONE WILL BECOME A LARGE PARTY AND AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE DC. IT IS NO LONGER INTERESTED IN MERGER WITH THE PSDI BECAUSE IT BELIEVES IT CAN ABSORB PSDI VOTERS ONE BY ONE. ACCORDING TO BIASINI, THE PSDI WILL LOSE SOME BUT WILL NOT BE ELIMINATED. IN DISCUSSING THE PSI, HE MENTIONED ARFEI, MARIOTTI, AND CRAXI AS LEADERS WHO SEE THAT THERE IS NO REALISTIC CHOICE FOR THE PSI BUT CONTINUED COOPERATION WITH THE DC AND THE PRI. HE ALSO DESCRIBED THEM AS CONVINCED DEMOCRATS WHO WILL NOT WILLINGLY BRING THE PCI INTO

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6. BIASINI ALSO EXPRESSED HIS RELIEF THAT THE USG HAD FINALLY STATED CLEARLY ITS POSITION ON THE PCI, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME DOUBT IN ITALY ABOUT THE USG POSITION EARLIER IN THE YEAR. HE HOPES THAT USG WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK CLEARLY TO THE ITALIAN PUBLIC ON THESE ISSUES.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL LEADERS, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL SITUATION, SOCIALISTS, COMMUNISTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 19 NOV 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975ROME16961  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750403-0828  
**From:** ROME  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 04 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <04 JUN 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <05 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** REPUBLICAN PARTY VIEWS OF ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE SUMMARY: TWO REPUBLICAN PARTY LEADERS EXPRESS GUARDED  
**TAGS:** PINT, PINS, IT, REPUBLICAN PARTY  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006